

UCLA GRADUATE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Your Community. Your Experience. Your GSA.

Dear Councilmember Koretz:

The UCLA Graduate Students Association, which represents the nearly 13,000 graduate and professional students of your *alma mater*, UCLA, are proud to join the Westwood Village Improvement Association in encouraging you to amend the Westwood Village Specific Plan (WVSP) to create a more vibrant destination for our community.

The nearly 30-year old WVSP must be amended to account for the emergence of Fast Casual restaurants. Fast Casual is the fastest growing sector in the food service industry. These restaurants are often owned by named chefs, who try to use locally sourced and organic ingredients. To minimize labor costs while providing cooked-to-order specialty food, Fast Casual concepts employ counter service and technology such as iPads for ordering. Current Westwood Fast Casual restaurants like 800 Degrees, Tender Greens, and Native Foods are classified as Fast Food under the WVSP and, since we exceed the current WVSP regulation for Fast Food, similar establishments like Sweet Green, Mendocino Farms, California Fish Grill, Porto's Bakery and Cafe, Burgerim, Luna Grill, Urban Plates, Hiho, Flower Child, and Everytable are prohibited from joining our district.

The WVSP also misclassifies incidental food uses like Starbucks, Stan's Donuts, and Diddy Riece Cookies as Fast Food. This only further inflates our numbers, currently prohibiting us from welcoming exciting businesses like Blue Bottle Coffee, Intelligentsia, Afters Ice Cream, and Salt & Straw.

No other community in Los Angeles is saddled with such onerous food use restrictions. We believe that the original intent of these regulations was to prevent Westwood from becoming "Fast Food Nation", a goal with which we are in agreement. Over the decades, however, as tastes have evolved the WVSP hasn't; putting our district at a competitive disadvantage in attracting exciting new food concepts. Furthermore, the vacancies that the regulations perpetuate gives the impression that Westwood is hostile to new businesses, which negatively impacts leasing to formal restaurants and other retailer merchants.

While we urge you to overhaul the entire Westwood Village Specific Plan as quickly as possible, since it needs many further changes to bring in the housing and entertainment that our community desperately needs, we see the WVIA's food use amendment as an important first step in the right direction and wholeheartedly support it!

Sincerely,
UCLA Graduate Students Association



316 KERCKHOFF HALL, 308 WESTWOOD PLAZA, LOS ANGELES, CA 90095